SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Sir, we should take up Half-an-Hour Discussion ...(*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the Minister answer... (*Interruptions*).

श्री रजनी रंजन साहु : महोदय, हाफ-एन-हावर डिसकशन इस पर होना चाहिए। ..(व्यवधान)...

MR. CHAIRMAN : Do you want the Question Hour to be suspended? (*Interruptions*). Give notice... (*Interruptions*).

श्री शिव चरण सिंह : रेलवे की समस्याओं पर आधे घंटे की डिसकशन होना चाहिए ।

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please give notice.

Retaining the Team of Doctors on Plague-Control Duty

*202. SHRI GAYA SINGH :

SHRI N. GIRI PRASAD† :

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that 24-odd doctors who had been on plague-control duty at the Indira Gandhi International Airport since October 1, 1994 were on duty till 29th November, 1994 more than a month after the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared that plague was no more a threat in the country; and

(b) if so, the details and reasons for retaining the team at the airport for such a long period ?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND) : (a) and (b) Health checks at airports were continued even after plague was fully contained to allay the apprehensions of other countries as per the recommendation of the World Health Organisation.

SHRI N. GIRI PRASAD: Sir, it is a good thing that the Government had extended the stay of doctors at the International Airport on the advice of the World Health Organisation. But the main point is why this dreadful disease or epidemic suddenly appeared in our country. I want to know whether the Government has assessed the impact of plague, and found out why it came suddenly, and what steps the Government has taken in order to assess the loss of life and property. I also want to know the steps the Government has taken on the recommendations or memoranda submitted by the Municipal Union of Surat which said, "In the wake of flood in the Tapti river and in the wake of large amount of garbage piling up, they advised the Municipal authorities and the Government to appoint a number of extra staff to clear the garbage." But the Government did not take any action. I want to know the steps the Government has taken to review the causes for this disease and its eradication.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR) : Sir, as soon as we got the report on the occurrence of plague in Beed district of Maharashtra and subsequently in Surat, the Government of India took all possible steps, sending experts, medicines giving all support to respective State Governments to contain the plague. Sir, about the occurrence of plague in our country we have appointed a Committee under a renowned medical scientist, Dr. Ramalingaswamy and the Committee has been requested to have a detailed study and give its report within six months. As far as the Memorandum submitted by the Municipal Union of Surat is concerned, I don't have any information about that, at present.

SHRI N. GIRI PRASAD: Sir, the main cause for the occurrence of plague and recently we had occurrence of malaria in some parts of the country—is the piling up of garbage. So, the health of the country is going down like this and the Government has not taken any step. I would like to tell the Minister that the garbage was cleared in the first few days of the occurrence of plague, but subsequently if was stopped due to lack of financial resources in the Municipalities and the Government has evolved a plan to provide finances to clear up this garbage so that such diseases don't occur in future. I want to know whether any plan of action is being contemplated by the Government.

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : Sir, there is garbage problem especially in the Municipal Corporations all over the country. The Municipal Corporation administration comes under the State Governments. We are in touch with the State Governments to take appropriate action for keeping their cities clean and on that part we have informed the State Governments. Sir, it is a very unhealthy thing to have garbage in any city or in any municipal area and it is directly under the State Governments. We have told the State Governments to take appropriate action so that there should not be any garbage, but it is up to the State Governments.

†The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri N. Giri Prasad.

श्री राजनाथ सिंह : श्रीमन्, प्लेग की बीमारी से इस देश की राजधानी दिल्ली के साथ-साथ इस देश के कई राज्य प्रभावित रहे हैं और सैकड़ों लोगों की मृत्यु भी हुई है । भिन्न-भिन्न समाचार पत्रों में इस प्लेग की बीमारी के भिन्न-भिन्न कारण बताए गए हैं । सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि इस प्लेग की बीमारी के मुख्य कारण क्या रहे हैं और इस चुनौती से भविष्य में निपटने के लिए सरकार द्वारा क्या कदम उठाये गये हैं ? मैं यह जानकारी चाहता हूं ।

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : Sir, let me clarify here that the number of deaths due to plague is 54. Fifty-four plague cases were reportd and it is not as reported in the news papers and other media that more than several hundred cases were there. It is not true. It is only 54 cases. Sir, it is 52 in Gujarat and one each in Delhi and Karnataka. As I have already mentioned, the Government of India has appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of a renowned medical scientist, Prof. V. Ramalingaswamy, former Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research. We have given the terms of reference which include elucidating the factors for the current outbreak of plague and its spread, advising strategy and policy and programme to control plague, and recommending the States to prevent such outbreak in future. The Committee has been requested to submit its report within six months.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : Sir, one of the cases for plague is the piling up of garbage everywhere. The hon. Minister says that it has advised the municipal corporations to clean up the garbage. But, the most important point is that diseases like plague, malaria, cholera etc. are all reappearing. The right to health is a normal human right. Without passing the buck, let me ask the hon. Minister, whether the Government of India, the Health Ministry shall make available additional funds for the use of municipal corporations to take emergency measures for cleaning up all the garbage? Of course, the political garbage cannot be cleaned and that is different, the other garbage is to be cleaned up. I would like to know whether the hon. Minister is in a position to make additional funds so that plague and malaria can be eradicated. Nowhere these are reappearing but it is only in India. Will the hon. Minister make available additional funds for these particular purposes, to the municipal corporations and to the State Governments without issuing any circular?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I can appreciate the hon. Member's concern for the health of the people of this country. Perhaps, the House is aware that Health is a State subject. The States have to provide necessary funds for public health, especially for eradication of diseases which affect the common man. Now, the questioner has put up a question about providing funds to the municipalities on an emergency basis to help them remove the garbage lying in almost all the municipal corporations of the country. As I said earlier, we have been in constant touch with the State Chief Secretaries and Health Ministries to take necessary steps in this regard. Basically, the municipalities or the local self governments have their own powers, their own funds and necessarily they have to make necessary provisions for that, but I am only saying that we will not avoid our responsibility to come to the aid of the maintenance of the health of the people. The hon. Member has said that it is nowhere in the world that the diseases are reappearing. But, for the information of the House, I can quote where plague is taking its toll of the people in other countries.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : Will that give satisfaction to the hon. Minister?

MR. CHAIRMAN : He is answering the point. It is true that there is plague in other parts of the world also... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : I do not think I will be able to satisfy the hon. Member but, I am giving the information for the benefit of the House. Sir, in other countries like countries in Africa, Madgasear, Uganda, Zaire etc... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : Sir, India is being compared with Africa?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Just listen, please.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : Specifically we want to know whether the hon. Minister is making available the funds or not.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please listen.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : Sir, ... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : I will sit down. You can speak whatever you want to speak... (*Interruptions*)... You have already spoken... (*Interruptions*). In South Africa, in the United States of America in Madgascar... (*Interruptions*). Sir I was saying in South Africa, in the United States of America, in Madgascar, in Kazakhstan, in Asia, in Denmark and in some other countries in the world there is plague but they have shown that there is no plague. It is not that there is plague only in India. This is for the information of the hon. Member.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : Sir, the Minister finds satisfaction that there is plague in Mangolia, in South Africa and that there should be plague in India also. That is for his satisfaction.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The Minister did not say so. This is only for information.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : *

MR. CHAIRMAN : It has nothing to do with it. I canont allow it to go on record because it has nothing to do with the question.

SHRI S.K.T. RAMACHANDRAN : He is wasting the time of the House. We are all interested in the welfare of the country.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The Minister is completing his answer. Mr. Minister, do you have anything to add to the answer?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : Sir, there would not be any more * conclusion than what the hon. Member has drawn.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA Pardon

SHRI B. SHANKARANANND : * conclusion.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : object to *conclusion. (*Interruptions*)... He is * He is * ...(*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please listen.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : Sir, he should not take the liberty to say unparliamentary words. He is

* * *

...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : I will say something more ...(*Interruptions*) ... something more to you.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA

* * *

...(*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Gurudas Das Gupta, you are going much beyond the scope of the question. Let him complete the answer.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : I am not going, he is going.

SHRI S.K.T. RAMACHANDRAN : Sir, he is wasting the time of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Minister, please answer the point so that I can go to the other question.

*Expunged as ordered by the Chair.

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : Sir, I have to say one thing on what he has spoken about me personally. I would like to inform the Member and not the House, through you, Sir, that I have won seven parliamentary elections to the Lok Sabha successfully in my public life. Let him not teach me lessons of integrity.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA : He has not answered the point about the allocation of funds.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The point has been answered that it is done by the local governments.

SHRI S.K.T. RAMACHANDRAN : Sir, plague is a havoc and it has caused much concern to the country. But what concerns us more is the publicity, the alarming publicity, the publicity in a disproportionate magnitude, so that it can cause problems to the economy of the country. Most of the foreigners refused to come to this country and because of this our tourism income has gone down. In so many ways the Press has also caused loss to our country. In these circumstances, we should try to let the foreigners know that the actual epidemic is not of the magnitude as is published in the Press. For that the Government has to restrain the press from publishing things in such an alarming magnitude and also to see that such things do not happen.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please conclude.

MR. S.K.T. RAMACHANDRAN : I am speaking about the welfare of the country I am very much concerned with the welfare of the country.

MR CHAIRMAN : Please conclude your question quickly.

SHRI S.K.T. RAMACHANDRAN : Sir, my question is : what step has the Government taken to contain the Press and also in future to curb such unauthorised publicity ? ...(*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN : You cannot talk across like that. Mr. Ramachandran, please sit down. The Minister is replying.

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : Sir, I share the concern of the hon. Member. From our Ministry side, we have held several press conferences and clarified the position on the occurrence of the plague in our country. On the health aspect, all international tourists look towards the WHO. Sir, we were in constant touch with the WHO, and the WHO also has given instructions to the international tourists. If you allow me, Sir, I will quote what they have said. Sir, I

quote : "WHO does not recommend change in individuals' plans to travel to India, but advises caution in travelling to the city of Surat. There is no restriction for travellers visiting India or passengers in transit in the airports in India. Surat is the only locality declared an epidemic zone..." And that was so on the 30th of September, 1994 as per WHO. We have requested the WHO, and the Director-General of WHO has visited the place. An international team also visited... (*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN : Have you done anything to counter the adverse publicity?

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : ...and we have taken all possible steps.

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN : Sir, I do not know how effective this communication was. All the exports were stopped because they wanted certificates. The entire economy went into a crisis... (*Interruptions*).

SHRI S.K.T. RAMACHANDRAN : Sir, the question is with regard to the adverse publicity The hon. Minister has not referred to that... (*Interruptions*).

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : Mr. Chairman, Sir, unfortunately, the media over-played the plague situation in the country. Even when the World Health authorities came here to certify that quick action and very effective steps had been taken by the Government to control and contain this disease, the media, unfortunately, did not support. It is not that we have not done the job. We have done the job. The world over, we have been praised for the effective control of plague in the quickest time possible.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN : Sir, recently, I had an occasion to meet a world-renowned bacteriologist. They had a conference in India during the time of the plague, and in that conference, they have concluded that it was not plague at all. They said that the disease was not plague at all, but it was a disease which was simulating plague, and originally, because the people had found out and reported to the press that it was plague, they have been consistently saying that this is plague. He also gave me a paper. For want of time, I could not go through it. The Minister is aware that there is another view that this disease is not plague but a disease which has simulated plague. And because it was originally said by some authorities that it was plague, they have been consistently saying that this is plague.

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : Sir, it is confirmed by the NICD, our National Institute of Communicable Diseases that it is plague, and it is supported by our medical scientists also.

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : सभापति महोदय, मैं सरकार से जानना चाहूंगा कि जो इंक्वायरी कमेटी आपने सेटअप की है, उसकी टर्म्स ऑफ रिफरेंस में था कि म्यूनिसिपालिटी की आर्थिक हालत क्या है ताकि वह इस काम को कर सकें ? जहां तक हमारी सूचना है, यह टर्म्स ऑफ रिफरेंस में ही नहीं है । तो बिना पैसे के देश को स्वच्छ बनाने का काम कैसे किया जा सकता है, यह तो सरकार ही बता सकती है ? इसलिए जब आपने टर्म्स ऑफ रिफरेंस में रखा ही नहीं है तो फिर क्या होगा ? इसलिए इस बारे में आप सफाई दें कि क्यों नहीं रखा और वह कैसे करेंगे ?

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : Sir, the problem of the municipalties is more known to our hon. senior Members. Garbage is always there, and it is not the only cause of plague. Sir, if you allow me, I can read out what the scientific reason is for the occurrence of plague. It is the rodent fleas which cause the bubonic plague and the pneumonic plague. All these things are there. It is not that only because of garbage that plague broke out in Surat.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA : I never said so.

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : There are many municipalities in the country which have the problem in regard to garbage clearance. But from the Health Ministry side, there is no scheme to give financial help to these municipalities for clearing the garbage.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Gujral.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA : Sir, the hon. Minister wants to add something.

SHRI B SHANKARANAND : Sir, I would like to say this in addition to what my colleague has said. The hon. Member wants to know the terms of reference of this Committee. I think...

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA : Terms of reference in relation to this specific point, i.e. whether the financial position of the municipalties would be looked into or not. I say this because, primarily, that is the agency which has to do something in this regard. That is why I am asking this. There is nothing to this effect in the terms of reference according to my information. If you can help, I would be happy.

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : Quite right. Sir, I would like to repeat for the

benefit of the House. I quote the terms of reference: 'To elucidate the factors responsible for the current outbreak of plague and its sperad'. Perhaps it includes what you said.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: The financial aspect is not included.

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND: The question is whether it would go into the financial aspect also. That also the Committee can look into.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: Then you make it clear. You write to the Committee that they can go into this also. I would be very happy.

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND: Yes.

SHRI INDER KUMAR GUJARAL: Sir, the hon. Minister has tried to underplay the situation. It is not a question of propaganda. It is not a question of the number of cases, whether it is more or less The issue, basically, is this. I think my hon. friend knows it. Not once, not twice, not thrice, but in the last forty or fifty years, there are any number of reports available and you do not need one more expert committee to tell you that excepting the N.D.M.C. no other municipality in the country is financially viable.

Now, the point is, if a plan has to be made obviously—I assume—the Government, like a corporate body, works together—may I ask the hon. Minister whether he had approached the Planning Commission on this issue that the financial structure of the municipalities had to be improved? This is one thing.

Secondly, has the hon. Minister thought in terms of improving the sanitation methodology and technology? It does not need a World Health Organisation report to tell us that our cities are dirty. It does not need any health organisation to tell us that there is filth all around, that we first collect the garbage on the roadside and then remove it and diseases spread all around. Sir, this incident of plague—I am not discussing its dimension—has brought us disrepute abroad and despair at home. May I ask him whether he is willing to undertake the task of evolving a scheme? This is apart from the work of the Committee; the Committee is to suggest ways to avoid this kind of a situation. I wrote to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister wrote back to me saying that he had referred the issue to you and to the Ministry of Urban Development. May I know from the hon. Minister whether the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Urban Development would sit together and evolve a comprehensive scheme to see that our health and sanitation improve?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND: Sir, the hon. Member is right in his point about the maintenance of sanitary conditions by the municipalities. It does need to deep thought and a co-ordinated approach to solve this problem. It is not only the question of the Health Ministry. This also involves the Ministry of Urban Development, the State Ministries and the local authorities themselves.

As far as the question of funds is concerned, necessarily we have to find a way. We have to consult the Planning Commission. In that regard, the suggestion made by the hon. Member is well received.

Construction of overbridge near Sakhoti Tanda Railway Station

*203. SHRIMATI MALTI SHARMA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the road users are facing difficulties due to frequent closing of level crossing near Sakhoti Tanda Railway Station (N.R.);

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration for construction of overbridge on the above level crossing; and

(c) if so, by when the work on the job is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI C. K. JAFFAR SHARIEF): (a) **Yes, Sir.**

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. A Road overbridge for this location, was sanctioned and included in Railway's budget for the year 1987-88 but had to be dropped in 1991-92 as State Government failed to acquire land for construction of approaches. Railways are ready to build this Road overbridges, as soon as State Government is prepared to do so.

श्रीमती मालती शर्मा: सभापति महोदय, मैं यह जानकारी चाहती हूं, जैसा माननीय मंत्री जी ने यह तो स्वीकार किया कि है 1987-88 के बजट में इस पुल को स्वीकार कर लिया गया था, तो क्या केन्द्रीय मंत्री जी अपने को इतना निस्सहाय मान रहे हैं कि वह वहां की प्रदेश सरकार को यह आदेश नहीं दे सकते कि इतना महत्वपूर्ण लेवल क्रॉसिंग होते हुए यहां की भूमि का तुरन्त अधिग्रहण किया जाए ? क्या इसके लिए माननीय मंत्री जी आदेश देने का कष्ट करेंगे ?

SHRI C. K. JAFFER SHARIEF: Sir, there is no question of directing any State Government. Whenever such demands come, we do write to the State Government whether they are willing to take